



Republican Policy Committee

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Clinton Redefines Terms for U.S. Mission in Bosnia

On May 31, President Clinton announced another new policy line on Bosnia. This latest Presidential statement comes in the wake of NATO airstrikes on targets in the Bosnian Serb capital, Pale [PAH-leh], and the retaliatory seizure of some 300 U.N. peacekeepers by the Serbs. Recent reports carry news of the downing of an American F-16 over Bosnian Serb territory and the possibility of an agreement between the Bosnian Serbs and the United Nations to release the U.N. hostages over the weekend of June 3-5 if the U.N. agrees to refrain from requesting further NATO airstrikes. As of press time, it is unknown how these fast-breaking developments will affect the new policy laid down on May 31, analysis of which constitutes the balance of this paper.

The Newest Clinton Policy on Bosnia

Speaking to Air Force Academy graduates in Colorado Springs, President Clinton expanded the possible range of missions under which he would consider sending U.S. ground troops to assist U.N. forces in Bosnia. The President added a new possibility: the use of American forces, in cooperation with those of other NATO countries, to aid in a "reconfiguration" and "strengthening" of a continued U.N. mission in Bosnia. He said:

We have a longstanding commitment to help our NATO allies, some of whom have troops in the U.N. operation in Bosnia, to take part in a NATO operation to assist them in a withdrawal if that should ever become necessary. And so, if necessary, and after consultation with Congress, **I believe we should be prepared to assist NATO if it decides to meet a request from the United Nations troops for help in a withdrawal or a reconfiguration and a strengthening of its forces.** We have received no such request for any such assistance, and we have made no such decision. . . . I want to say to you we have obligations to our NATO allies, and I do not believe we can leave them in the lurch. **So I must carefully review any request for an operation involving a temporary use of our ground forces.** [Emphasis added]

Previously, Administration policy had been that the United States only would send ground forces into Bosnia under two conditions:

- As part of a NATO force to police a final peace settlement; the Administration indicated a willingness to send from one-third up to one-half of a 50,000-man force.

- As part of a NATO effort to extricate U.N. forces from Bosnia, should they decide to leave; the Administration has indicated that 20,000 to 25,000 Americans might be available.

On Saturday, May 27, Admiral Leighton Smith, commander of U.S. Naval Forces in Europe, had dispatched the three-ship "amphibious ready group" to the area, which has 2,000 U.S. troops from the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit onboard. These are backed up by the aircraft carrier U.S.S. *Theodore Roosevelt*, with 6,000 personnel and squadrons of F-14 Tomcats and F/A-18 Hornets, and supporting warships normally armed with cruise missiles. These ships include the U.S.S. *Arleigh Burke* Aegis guided-missile destroyer, the U.S.S. *John Rodgers*, a destroyer, and a refueling ship. En route to join these is the U.S.S. *Mississippi*, a guided-missile cruiser. In addition, one nuclear-powered fast-attack submarine is in the Adriatic Sea off the nearby Croatian coast.

Other assets that could be tapped quickly for a military operation in the Balkans include numerous NATO aircraft based in Italy, U.S. forces in Germany, and a paratroop brigade from Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

The United Nations Response

The May 31 policy shift follows the issuance of a report by U.N. Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali for consideration by the U.N. Security Council outlining four options for the future U.N. mission in Bosnia:

1. Withdrawing the U.N. peacekeeping forces;
2. Continuing with the status quo;
3. Authorizing a new, multinational military force, switching from a peacekeeping operation to an operation to impose peace; and
4. Scaling back the existing force to the six designated "safe areas," including Sarajevo, with no authority to use force to defend them, except in cases of self-defense.

Broadly interpreted, Options 3 and 4 coincide with the two new missions President Clinton identified to support through the deployment of U.S. troops. Option 1 — the use of U.S. troops to assist in a withdrawal by the U.N. Protection Force (UNPROFOR) — was already covered by previous Administration policy. Reportedly, Boutros-Ghali is leaning toward recommendation of Option 3; previously, he favored Option 4. [*New York Times* 6/1/95]. The British and French also appear to be leaning toward Option 3.

Congressional Responses

For the past several months, and until President Clinton's recent announcement, the most likely scenario for the use of U.S. troops was assistance for U.N. withdrawal. Congressional concerns over the complexities of such an operation were highlighted in a March 15, 1995, letter to President Clinton signed by Senators Dole, Thurmond, Helms,

Stevens and Lieberman. While the Senators recognized that U.S. troops might be needed to assist in the withdrawal of U.N. troops from Bosnia, they stated that such assistance should only be granted under strict conditions (e.g., that such operation be under NATO command and under robust rules of engagement, and that American lives would not be risked to rescue equipment). Further, the letter stated that U.S. assistance should be premised on an understanding that UNPROFOR's withdrawal clears the way for lifting the arms embargo.

President Clinton responded by assuring Senators that these strict conditions would be met in any operation to extricate U.N. peacekeepers, but declined to lift the arms embargo as a precondition for a "demonstration of solidarity in a crisis involving Allied lives." In a May 31 press statement in response to the latest Clinton Administration pronouncement, Senator Dole reiterated that each of the conditions outlined in the March 31 letter should also apply to the potential use of American ground forces to rearrange UNPROFOR positions: "To date, it is unclear that any of these conditions have been met. Until they are, it will be very difficult for the Clinton Administration to gain the approval of Congress for the introduction of U.S. ground forces into Bosnia."

Senator Thurmond has scheduled hearings on the Bosnia crisis and postponed mark-up of the yearly defense authorization bill following President Clinton's decision to support U.N. redeployment with U.S. troops. The Senate Armed Services Committee hearings likely will be held the week of June 5-9.

President Clinton's most recent policy announcement to use U.S. troops for what could be an expanded UNPROFOR mission has prompted these responses by U.S. Senators:

Senator Dole

"Unable or unwilling to gain European support for allowing Bosnia to defend itself, the Clinton Administration has offered American forces in support of a failed approach. Providing American ground forces is no substitute for providing American leadership. Instead of reinforcing a failed policy, the Administration should assert American leadership for a viable policy which would grant Bosnia the means to defend itself without American soldiers." [Press Statement, 5/31/95]

Senator Thurmond

"Along with other members of Congress, I have expressed support for sending U.S. troops to Bosnia *only* as part of a NATO mission to assist in the withdrawal of the U.N. forces. I feel we owe this support to our allies. However, I strongly oppose involving U.S. ground troops or expanding U.S. involvement in Bosnia for any other purpose." [Press Release, May 31, 1995]

Senator Helms

"Putting American soldiers in harm's way for a 'reconfiguration' of U.N. forces is totally and completely unacceptable to this Senator. . . .

"The U.N. mission in Bosnia has failed. It must be withdrawn, and the U.S. should not refuse to assist in its withdrawal. But in no way should American soldiers be sent to Bosnia for any reason other than assisting in such a withdrawal." [Press Release, 6/1/95]

Senator Lugar

"Let me add a fourth alternative. . . . We should send a force of at least 70,000-80,000 NATO forces, about a third of them United States', to get those people out of harms way, to end their mission. . . . [O]therwise, we're going to see an escalation of the war after UNPROFOR comes out, or continuous hostages, so long as they stay." [CNN, "Larry King Live," 5/31/95]

Senator Lieberman

"The Brits and the French have two great military forces. I think we really have to be convinced that there is something we can add to extract them that they cannot do for themselves." [PBS, "MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour," 5/31/95]

Senator McCain

"I think any action would require approval by votes in the Congress when we're sending American forces into a region where conflict is taking place. . . .

"I would support, under the right circumstances, not under U.N. command, U.S. assistance in extracting those forces. I think we owe that to our allies. But for redeployment, I would be adamantly opposed to it and I think there should be debate and vote in Congress on this issue since there seems to be no leadership from the Administration on it." [PBS, "MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour," 5/31/95]

Senator Kassebaum

"I think just beefing up peacekeeping forces and attempting to consolidate their positions is somewhat an escalation that leads nowhere and we still don't know for sure what we are prepared to do. . . . we should get all troops out. We should not go in on land to do that, but provide all the equipment, send the carriers off shore, get them out and do a swift policy of getting them out. Be prepared immediately to lift the arms embargo. I would not, as some have suggested, be prepared to go in and deliver heavy equipment again and send our troops in because I don't think the American people are prepared to back up what would be necessary, I think, under any scenario that's been laid out so far. . . . And we ought to recognize that." [National Public Radio, "Morning Edition," 5/31/95]

Senator Hutchison

"This is basically a civil war. . . . I don't think it is an American problem, and I don't think it is a United States security interest in which our troops should be in harm's way. . . . I cannot reiterate strongly enough that he [the President] cannot unilaterally . . . put our ground troops in harm's way without coming to Congress." [Fox Morning News, 5/31/95]

Senator Gramm

"We don't need to consider American combat troops there. We have no ability to affect the outcome of what is already a 1,000-year war. About the last thing we want to see is Americans chained to bridges in Bosnia." [As reported by *The Boston Globe*, 5/31/95]

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